BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
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BOMBAY 400 023,
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MANOJ MUNI

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5. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON FOOD HABITS OF JACKAL (*CANIS AUREUS*) IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, AS SHOWN BY SCAT ANALYSIS

Food habits of jackal were studied in Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur from September, 1984 to August, 1985 by scat analysis. Altogether 102 scat samples were collected and analysed. The hair samples from the scats were identified in the field with naked eye comparing with hair samples kindly given by Bombay Natural History Society. Results are given in Table 1. Samples collected from December to March had *Zizyphus jujuba* fruits. Seeds of Date palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*) and Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*) were also observed in their scats during June and July respectively.

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF EACH FOOD ITEM OF JACKAL AT KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR (SEP. 1984-AUG. 1985)

Food items	No. of times occurred	Percentage
Rodents	45	26.5
Birds	41	24.1
Grass	34	20.0
Fruits	28	16.5
Insects	7	4.1
Snake	7	4.1
Chital	4	2.4
Nilgai	2	1.2
Fish	2	1.2

Feathers of coot (*Fulica atra*) and Grey partridge (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) were identified from their scats.

Chital and Nilgai hair were found in 2.4 and 1.2 per cent of the remains. However this low figure probably represents scavenged food rather than prey killed by the jackals themselves.

According to Schaller (1967), jackals occasionally catch hares. Even though hares (*Lepus nigricollis ruficaudatus*) are fairly common in Bharatpur, their remains were not seen in jackal scats. This may be largely because of my inability to identify the hair of hare in the field. Similarly remains of Blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapra*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), feral cattle (*Bos indicus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and Rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) were also not observed.

Broad ventral scales of snakes, possibly of python, were also seen. Whether they kill python or scavenge is not known. However, three jackals trying to attack a 2 m. long python have been recorded by Bhupathy (1986). On the contrary, Singh (1983) records that in Corbett Park python is a predator on the jackals.

LECTURER,
WILDLIFE INSTITUTE OF INDIA,
P. O. NEW FOREST,
DEHRADUN (U.P.) - 248 006,
December 23, 1987.

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K. SANKAR

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6. INTERACTION BETWEEN DHOLES (*CUON ALPINUS*) AND A PYTHON (*PYTHON MOLURUS*) IN MUDUMALAI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

On 31st Aug. 1986 between 1500 and 1520 hrs. an elephant mahout, while looking for his elephant in the forest, saw a huge python (*Python molurus*) attacking a yearling Chital (*Cervus axis*) doe. As the snake [our estimate was 14 to 15 feet (*c.* 4.5 m.) long] coiled itself around the deer, a pack of 8 Dhole (*Cuon alpinus*) which were hunting nearby immediately rushed to the spot. A couple of the dogs boldly darted in to grab a few bites off the rump of the deer, even as the python was killing the deer. At this point the mahout, not wanting the python disturbed, chased the dholes away and returned to the elephant camp to report his sighting.

We were informed just as we returned from our field work and managed to reach the spot at 1655 hrs. The dholes were about 60 m. from the python. They had probably just returned and had apparently not interfered with the snake which, by now had already swallowed the entire neck of the chital. A few minutes after our arrival the dholes moved off and the python proceeded to swallow the entire deer by 1731 hrs.

This incident raises a lot of interesting questions. Would the dholes have stolen the kill had they not been chased away by the mahout? Would the python leave its kill or would it try to defend it? Would the dholes attack the python also? Dholes are known to drive away tigers (*Panthera tigris*) and leopards (*Panthera pardus*) from their kills and at times even kill these predators. As they had already snatched a few bites from the deer, there is a strong reason to believe that they would have stolen the kill, had they not been driven away. If the dhole had attacked the python itself, it might have abandoned its kill and escaped into the dense Lantana (*Lan-*